

RESEARCH PROJECT ON TIMOR DOCUMENTATION IN MACAU

CIDAC

PROGRESS REPORT No. 5

Centro de Documentação

TO THE NORTHERN TERRITORY UNIVERSITY PLANNING AUTHORITY

Work is progressing at a brisk rate, both in the AHM (Arquivo Histórico de Macau) during the day and in my room at night and at weekends.

As I was expecting to probably have to leave Macau and return to Darwin in mid-July, I put aside the task of going through the BPMT (Boletim da Provincia de Macau e Timor) when I had reached 1891, in order that I could go through the newspapers from about 1850 to World War II. Fortunately most of these have been in a good enough condition to be photocopied, and the AHM has been absolutely marvellous in having hundreds of photocopies processed for me in the Education Department. Most of these are on A3 size paper, and most of my spare time is now occupied with arranging these into folders, a not inconsiderable task what with blanking-out the few lines above to insert the volume, issue and page numbers and the date, typing headings on the blank A4 sheets, cutting all the required material out of the photocopies and pasting it onto the sheets. I am still following the rule of making typed copies of very small items, but I am not bothering about making copies of small items which have already appeared in the BPMT unless the newspaper has some comment to make on the subject. Most of the newspaper items are quite long, so the time occupied with typing is much reduced, e.g., in Volume II of O Independente, May 1874-April 1875, the column length of photocopied material and typed material works out to approximately 2,700 and 200 centimetres respectively; that volume will probably need a folder of about 65 pages. Volume III of the same publication, already filed, only needed 12 pages.

Newspaper v. newspaper, clergy v. anticlericals, governor v. governed, monarchist v. republican, favouritism, personal disputes, scandals, despotism, in whatever permutations one might wish — "all this, and more" (to use an unoriginal phrase) — seem to have been the meat in the Macau Press of the time. Some locals have it that, except for the clergy and monarchy, things haven't changed much, though that is not for me to comment further upon. With the organization that the Province of Macau and Timor had in the second half of the 19th century, with public servants and military officials going from Macau to Timor on tours-of-duty, with the constant flow of public moneys from Macau to Timor with no apparent advantages to anyone except for a few individuals, with Timor being a place of exile (whether deserved or undeserved) for people from Macau and other colonies, Timor could not avoid being drawn into being a stamping-ground for Macau intrigues and for those intrigues to have an effect on Timor's "home-grown" intrigues, which it already had in abundance.

As already mentioned in earlier reports, it is essential that I collect the data from the BPMT in order to get the official information on people and events, but it would be wrong to compile a history just from that source, just as it would be wrong to rely simply on what one newspaper writes. At least, many events are agreed upon; but why they happened, who was responsible, reactions to the events, etc., are so varied. The most outstanding instance of this so far is in the different positions taken by the Press on the assassination of Governor Alfredo de Lacerda Maia in 1887. Both sides admit that he was killed by Timorese troops. One side is all for law and order. The other side puts it that the incident was brought about by the failure of the governor to heed the legitimate grievances of the Timorese troops against the brutalities committed by the governor's favourite, the Government Secretary. Apparently, the troops had assembled to meet the Secretary on his usual ride from Lahane down to Dili, and to give him a beating, but the Governor went in his stead on this morning, and,

on encountering the troops at the sentry-post, things got rather out of hand. He was not the intended victim, but he began pulling the trigger of his revolver and was overwhelmed and killed by the troops. It was not a general revolt. The material collected includes an eye-witness account of the actual assault, many reports on the measures taken in the months after the event, orders for summary execution of prisoners in the Dili jail if any armed Timorese are in the vicinity, transporting to Macau of prisoners, letter from the Bishop of Macau (and former Superior of the Timor Missions) on why he had visited those prisoners in jail in Macau, orders from Lisbon countermanding orders from Macau, etc.

This is one of those instances where one needs that little bit of information from the BPMT. The newspapers only mention the Government Secretary as being "alferes (i.e., sub-lieutenant) Ferreira"; but there were 2 sub-lieutenants by the name of Ferreira in Timor at that time. Which one? From the appointments one finds that it was Francisco Ferreira.

The 1887 volume of the BPMT which I mentioned in my last report as being in too bad a condition to be photocopied was, fortunately, also held by the Imprensa Nacional de Macau. I was surprised to hear that the Imprensa does not have a photocopier of its own, but they kindly arranged to have the copies made for me. Speaking of photocopiers, the AHM has given up trying to do anything with their old one, and they have 2 new ones on order, including one for reductions.

I have not yet been able to make any arrangements for photocopying duplicates of my own material to send off to you, so I'll continue to make use of the commercial photocopying services just for these reports and the occasional piece of information which might be of interest to you. Something which I shall type up to send down with this report is my translation of an excerpt from an interview which appeared in the local press with the Director of the Education Services of Macau, Dr. Coelho da Silva. The excerpt deals with a planned meeting in Macau in September of Rectors from universities in Portugal, China and Macau. You will see that it has some references to the possibility of a project towards the reorganization of the AHM. I passed on a few written thoughts of my own to the Director of the AHM about the meeting, including whether or not it might be possible for observers from other interested universities or other institutions to attend (although anyone who may be interested in doing so will probably already have something else planned for that period, as these things are usually planned so far ahead), and whether any report resulting from that meeting will be made available to interested persons. She has passed it on to Dr. Coelho da Silva, but I have not yet heard anything further. He would probably have to check first with all the probable participants.

It is now probable that the AHM will remain open until after the meeting of the University Rectors, so it is unlikely that I shall have any interruption to my use of the AHM while I am still here.

As well as the above-mentioned interview, I'll enclose a few translations of press items about publications of interest to this region. The AHM completed the revision of the list of files from the SAC (Serviços da Administração Civil) to which I referred in my last report. I've typed up a bi-lingual list of the files dealing with Timor, 28 pages, 253 files, and I'll send a copy when I have some made. These files include some references to shipping services between Macau and Timor in the years 1886-1899. The main carrier seems to have been the Eastern & Australian Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Gibb, Livingston & Co. was the Hongkong agent, Gibbs, Bright & Co. the agent in most Australian cities. An advertisement for 1900 in one of the files gives a V.V. Brown as the Port Darwin agent. The ports-of-call given (some only when required) are Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, Cairns, Cooktown,

Thursday Island, Port Darwin, Timor (Dilhi), Manila, Hong Kong, Kobe. The ships in use at the time were Airlie, Eastern, Guthrie and Australian. I know that one A.W. Pearse travelled on the same company's St. Albans in later years, as he had a short article and photographs of "The rebellion in Timor" in The Pastoralists' Review, Melbourne, 22(6):554-556, August 1912. I don't know when they discontinued the service. For most of the 1886-1899 period, it seems that the company guaranteed to make 12 stops a year in Dili — 6 on the way up and 6 on the way back — stopping in port for only 12 hours, though the government was always pressing for 24 hours.

As one gets into the 1890's, Port Darwin and the shipping services from there are mentioned more frequently, usually in relation to mail, but sometimes in reference to the mining companies. A Hongkong Portuguese-language newspaper, O Porvir, 9 February 1901, has a letter from Dili, 17 January 1901, which mentions that —

"The gunboat "Thomaz Andrea", which was recently sold to a commercial firm in Port Darwin, is soon going to begin making trips between Port Darwin and Dilly; it is going to bring for import necessary supplies for consumption in this colony and buy for export coffee, sandalwood and other Timor products. With this new trade, thus established, the colony will profit a lot."

The same letter mentions that the Governor of New South Wales, Beauchamp, had called in on the Australian on 25 November 1900, on his way back to England, but the local governor, José Celestino da Silva, had been away in the interior, fighting the rebels of Manofahi.

A paper of 31 October 1885 reports that the Governor of Macau and Timor, Thomaz de Souza Roza, had been delayed for three days on his Macau-Siam-Timor-Japan-Macau round trip by being forced to go to Port Darwin.

I still have one case of papers to unpack since shifting back to my usual room after rewiring and painting, so I can't locate something else that I was going to add in full translation, but it is an attack by the Chief of the Health Services of Macau and Timor on a telegram sent by the representative of the South Australian Government in Darwin, Parsons, which declared a quarantine on particular categories of passengers coming from China and Timor. He says that the conditions alleged were not true, and that it was really an attempt at bringing in restrictions on immigration that were officially introduced shortly after by the Australian authorities.

All of these things are increasing my interest in finding out about whatever press might have been in existence in Darwin in the days when mail-boats called there. There may be references of people coming and going. There should be some information worth looking at in Sydney about the Eastern & Australian Steam Ship Co. Ltd. Passenger lists, log-books, etc. But I have so much on my hands already! It will take a long time to work my way through what I am collecting here, and this material will be of much greater relevance to Timor itself.

With the present rate of getting through sources here, I feel that, thanks to the generosity of the NTUPA in giving me a further award which will enable me to extend my stay in Macau from mid-July to mid-October I shall, by then, have been able to do the most complete survey possible of Timor material in published (but in most cases rare) periodical sources which are available here, and to get some idea of how much may remain to be done from other sources.

Kevin Sherlock

Macau, May 1984

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